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ABSTRACT

The convergence of three trends makes service to minority students an imperative for continuing education: (1) increasing proportions of diverse groups in the U.S. population and work force; (2) continuing education and retraining as keys to survival in a workplace of change; and (3) declining college enrollments of diverse populations and increasing income disparities related to level of educational attainment. Issues involved in participation and retention of minorities begin with campus climate. Ways to improve campus climate include: genuine pluralism that recognizes diversity of perceptions and values; increasing numbers of minority faculty and adult students who can serve as mentors and role models; and strong, visible actions in hiring practices, reward systems, and policy implementation. Financial aid is another key concern. Low-income groups appear to have less access to financial aid, and little is available for part-time study, despite high numbers of minority part-time students. Finally, adult and continuing education's role as a force for social change requires a reconceptualizing of lifelong learning. Instead of the existing hierarchy, a more equitable system would be a continuous configuration of educational offerings in which success at one level would mean direct access to the next. (Annotations of 18 print resources are provided; 3 resource organizations are listed.) (YLB)

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Minority Participation in Continuing Education

Trends and Issues Alerts

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS

MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Census data document the increasing proportions of diverse groups in the U.S. population and consequently the work force (Commission on Minority Participation 1988). Employment projections highlight continuing education and retraining as keys to survival in a workplace of change. At the same time, college enrollment of diverse populations appears to be declining, and income disparities related to level of educational attainment are increasing (Moe 1990; Ross-Gordon 1990). The convergence of these three trends makes service to minority students an imperative for continuing education.

By 1988, one-third of the U.S. population was African, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American (Commission 1988). However, participation rates of these groups in higher education have declined in the last decade (Ross-Gordon 1990), and nearly half of all minority college students are part time. In addition, diverse groups are underrepresented in the growing area of employer-sponsored training. For example, African Americans, 9.5 percent of the work force in 1987, received 5.1 percent of formal training; comparable numbers for Hispanic Americans were 5.5 percent and 2.7 percent (Martin 1993). Minority participation in continuing education, especially continuing professional education, remains minimal (Moe 1989; Taylor 1990). At the same time, access to continuing education is narrowing as financial crises cause an increasing focus on market-driven, income-generating programming (Martin 1993).

Issues involved in participation and retention of minorities begin with campus climate. Minority students, faculty, staff, and administrators who feel unwelcome or alienated in the campus environment are severely challenged to stay and to succeed. Moe (1989) cites a survey showing that large numbers of minority students feel their values are not reflected in the university culture. Because climate is central to all other efforts to improve minority participation, it is "both the point of departure and the culmination of all other efforts" (Green 1989, p. 113). Ways to improve campus climate include genuine pluralism that recognizes the diversity of perceptions and values (Taylor 1990); increasing the numbers of minority faculty and adult students, who can serve as mentors and role models (Kramer 1989; McCormick 1991); and strong, visible actions in hiring practices, reward systems, and policy implementation (Green 1989).

Financial aid is a key concern. Some suggest that access may be more a class than a race issue (National University Continuing Education Association 1989; Taylor 1990). Low income groups appear to have less access to financial aid (Orfield 1992), and little is available for part-time study, despite the high numbers of minority part-time students. Zwerling (1986) asserts that, in continuing education, financial aid is often based on achievement: the ability to hold a job and qualify for tuition reimbursement or pay one's own fees. Thus, those with higher educational and employment attainment consolidate their positions and widen the economic gap.

Finally, adult and continuing education's role as a force for social change requires a reconceptualizing of lifelong learning. Rather than the existing hierarchy, a more equitable system would be a continuous "configuration of offerings in which success at one level would mean direct access to the next" (ibid., p. 58). Thus, diverse students, who may have faced psychological and cultural barriers in previous schooling, could take advantage of the educational opportunities for lifelong learning and employment preparation that would enable their full participation in the changing work force and society.

Print Resources

Brown, S. V., and Clewell, B. C. ***Building the Nation's Work Force from the Inside Out: Educating Minorities for the Twenty-First Century.*** Norman: Center for Research on Multiethnic Education, University of Oklahoma, 1991. (ED 346 169)

Studies the impact of new immigration law on minority work force participation and examines how a focus on immigration ignores educational reforms crucial to the access and training of minorities.

Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life. ***One Third of a Nation.*** Washington, DC: American Council on Education; Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 1988. (ED 297 057)

The United States is moving backwards in efforts to achieve full participation of minority citizens. A national commitment to enabling minorities to achieve equal quality of life is essential.

Frey, J. F. "A Legacy of Cultural, Social, and Linguistic Hegemony in Education." ***PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*** 2 (1993): 33-42.

Students from minority groups are least successful in public schools, due to silent discrimination in the form of cultural, linguistic, and social stereotyping. Adult educators of minority students must deal with the legacy of students' educational background.

Gillett-Karam, R. "Confronting Diversity in the Community College Classroom." ***New Directions for Community Colleges*** no. 79 (Fall 1992): 83-94.

Through encouraging teaching excellence and enabling teachers to be 'eaders in the classroom, colleges can educate students while addressing diversity. Six critical teaching practices focus attention on the needs of women and racial/ethnic minorities.

Green, M. F., ed. ***Minorities on Campus: A Handbook for Enhancing Diversity.*** Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1989.

Focuses on leadership, an integrated approach, and institutional changes for developing a pluralistic campus climate.

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Jackson, J., ed. ***Education for a Multicultural Society: A New Agenda for Continuing Higher Education.*** Association for Continuing Higher Education, 1990. (ED 322 384)

Includes "Continuing Education and the Search for Equity" and "Creating a Multicultural School Environment."

"Johns Hopkins Institutes a Unique Program for Minorities in Business." ***NUCEA News*** 7, no. 7 (July-August 1991): 12.

The Leadership Development Program offers seminars taught primarily by minority business professionals. Minority attendees qualify for admission to the MBA program and have an opportunity for networking and career counseling with ethnic role models.

Kramer, J. L. "Continuing Education in a Multicultural Society." ***Journal of Continuing Higher Education*** 37, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 2-4. (EJ 381 501)

Traces the erosion of gains made in minority participation in the 1960s and 1970s. Describes the Minority Continuing Education Opportunity Program at the Ohio State University.

Martin, L. G. "Cultural Diversity: Fracture Lines in Adult Education Practice." ***PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*** 2 (1993): 21-26.

Six factors may account for lack of minority participation: unequal access to training in the workplace, stigma transference, ethnic typecasting, cultural assimilation, hopeless attitudes toward inner-city problems, and negative effects of instrumental individualism.

McCormick, T. "An Analysis of Some Pitfalls of Traditional Mentoring for Minorities and Women in Higher Education." 1991. (ED 334 905)

Identifies some problems in traditional mentoring: promotion of competition and elitism, scarcity of appropriate mentors for women and minorities, and extension of dependence and subordination.

Moe, J. F. "The Dream Deferred: Minority Adult Participation in Higher Education in the United States." ***Continuing Higher Education Review*** 53, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 35-49. (EJ 384 946)

Cites demographic data on minority adult educational attainment and addresses program factors to facilitate participation in continuing higher education.

Moe, J. F. "Education, Democracy, and Cultural Pluralism." ***New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*** no. 48 (Winter 1990): 31-44. (EJ 419 561)

Points out commonalities between late 19th- and late 20th-century diversity in U.S. society. States that programs to encourage minority adult participation must address the serious barriers facing of immigrants and minorities while addressing cultural diversity.

National University Continuing Education Association. ***Challenges for Continuing Higher Education Leadership: Economic Development in a Multicultural Society.*** Washington, DC: NUCEA, 1988. (ED 311 744)

Includes the following articles: "Minority Issues: Central Theme or Footnote," "Minorities and One College's Experience," and "Discrimination and Competitive Success."

National University Continuing Education Association. ***Challenges for Continuing Higher Education Leadership: Global Interdependence.*** Washington, DC: NUCEA, 1989. (ED 339 813)

Includes "On Teaching Language and Culture in America," "Immigration and Hispanic Educational Opportunities: Challenges for the 1990s," and "Strategies for Continuing Higher Education: Improving Educational Opportunities for Minorities."

Orfield, G. "Money, Equity, and College Access." ***Harvard Educational Review*** 62, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 337-372.

Demonstrates the substantial link between financial assistance and college attendance and reasons for the declining access of minority and low income groups to college financial aid.

Ross-Gordon, J. M. "Serving Culturally Diverse Populations." ***New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*** no. 48 (Winter 1990): 5-15. (EJ 419 559)

Demographic trends and data on minority participation suggest inequities in access. Theoretical explanations should attend to sociocultural forces affecting motivation. Models of practice must be based on understanding of the sociocultural context.

Taylor, R. "Racism, Ethnicity and University Adult Education." ***Studies in the Education of Adults*** 22, no. 2 (October 1990): 211-220. (EJ 416 037)

A British survey found little improvement in provision for minority students, little evidence of clear policy guidelines, few minority staff members, and low levels of minority involvement in continuing professional education.

Zwerling, L. S. "Lifelong Learning: A New Form of Tracking." ***New Directions for Community Colleges*** no. 54 (June 1986): 53-60. (ED 271 169)

Continuing education is potentially the most unequal form of higher education. Its contribution to social change depends upon new approaches to defining lifelong learning, a more equitable delivery system, and changes in affordability.

Resource Organizations

American Council on Education, Minorities in Higher Education Division, One Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202/939-9300).

Association for Continuing Higher Education, c/o Scott Evenbeck, Executive Vice President, Indiana University-Purdue/University of Indianapolis, 620 Union Drive, Room 143, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5171 (317/274-2637).

National University Continuing Education Association, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 615, Washington, DC 20036-1168 (202/659-3130).

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